

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 21, line 13, has been amended as follows:

*C2* -Then, the released NO<sub>2</sub> is reduced by unburned HC, H<sub>2</sub>, and CO contained in the exhaust gas, and discharged as N<sub>2</sub>, as expressed by (NO + CO = 1/2 N<sub>2</sub> + CO, (NO + H<sub>2</sub> = 1/2 N<sub>2</sub> + H<sub>2</sub>O). *[Redacted]*

### IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

*C3* 1. (Amended) An exhaust gas purifying apparatus of an internal combination engine, comprising:

exhaust gas purifying means, provided in an exhaust passage of the internal combustion engine, for absorbing NO<sub>x</sub> in exhaust gas when an air-fuel ratio of the exhaust gas is lean, and releasing or reducing the absorbed NO<sub>x</sub> when an oxygen concentration of the exhaust gas is reduced;

a light-off catalyst provided upstream of the exhaust gas purifying means in the exhaust passage, said light off catalyst having a lower O<sub>2</sub> storage capability than said exhaust gas purifying means;

the light-off catalyst and the exhaust gas purifying means are in an exhaust passage in series so that all the exhaust gas from the engine passes through both catalysts regardless of the engine operation modes; and

control means for controlling the air/fuel ratio of the exhaust gas so that an atmosphere having a reduced oxygen concentration is produced around

C3 said exhaust gas purifying means when an NO<sub>x</sub> conversion efficiency of the  
exhaust gas purifying means is decreased.

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